

Broadcast media ownership rules

I am writing to urge the Commission to refrain from adopting changes to the rules governing broadcast media ownership. In my opinion, further consolidation of broadcast media ownership in a relatively small number of large corporations would not serve the public interest. Moreover, relaxing the current rules restricting ownership of broadcast outlets would help hasten the demise of locally-owned and operated radio and television stations, depriving communities of important sources of local information and of outlets for the presentation of divergent viewpoints.

One need view only a few hours of the television, or listen to only a few hours of the radio produced by the media giants to realize that both radio and television have reached a level of homogeneity that is unhealthy in a society that values a free exchange of ideas. Further consolidation of media outlets in a few hands can only serve to accelerate this trend.

The Commission (and the broadcasters) must remember that the airwaves belong to the public. Every effort should be made to make it easier for local entrepreneurs to compete in the broadcasting industry, rather than making it easier for huge conglomerates to squeeze them out.

I have heard the argument that relaxing the rules will increase diversity on the airwaves. It may be true that there are more cable television channels than ever before. And it may be true that there are still thousands of radio stations in the country. But we should not confuse diversity with quality, and quantity with freedom of expression. I would rather see fewer channels and stations spread out among more owners with more viewpoints than a multitude of stations and channels held by a few companies, all of which look and sound alike.

The rules changes contemplated by the Commission are precisely the wrong approach to improving the quality of the broadcast media in this country. I respectfully request that the vote be postponed until additional public hearings on this important issue may be held and additional public comment solicited.

Thank you very much,

Michael Pacewicz